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THE GATHERING OF FIVE
PART ONE

THE SENSATIONAL

SPIDER-MAN®

DEZAGO

BENNETT

CABRERA

TEE VEE

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THE ALEISTER BUILDING IS AN ARCHITECTURAL MARVEL!

AN ENGINEERING MASTERPIECE, THE TOWER STANDS AS A SEAMLESS UNION OF THE GOTHIC AND THE CONTEMPORARY --

-- THRUSTING ITSELF HIGH UP INTO THE MANHATTAN SKYLINE, INTERRUPTING THE FAMILIAR STRAIGHT LINES AND SYMMETRY WITH ITS PECULIAR ANGLES AND IMPOSING SPIRES!

TO THE WORLD AT LARGE, THIS IMPRESSIVE STRUCTURE IS HOME TO THE TECHNOMANCER AGENCY, A POWERFUL FINANCIAL INSTITUTION WITH INFLUENCES AROUND THE GLOBE.

-- ON THE INSIDE, HOWEVER --

-- THE TECHNOMANCER AGENCY IS A SECRET SOCIETY UNTO ITSELF -- A FAR-REACHING CABAL OF MEN AND WOMEN DEDICATED TO THE ACQUISITION OF POWER THROUGH MEANS BOTH SCIENTIFIC --

-- AND SUPERNATURAL!

ONCE SUCH MAN IS HAMILTON CROMWELL, FIFTH DEGREE MAEGIS, MEMBER OF THE ELITE DARK CHAMBER!

... CERTAINLY THE RITUAL IS DESCRIBED IN ANY NUMBER OF THE OLD GRIMOIRES!

BUT, WHILE I AM IN POSSESSION OF ONE OF THE FRAGMENTS, AND EVEN IF ONE WERE TO LOCATE THE OTHER THREE FACETS, THEY STILL WOULD BE NAUGHT BUT ROCKS WITHOUT THE SPINDEL -- THE CENTERPIECE --

-- AND THAT HASN'T BEEN SEEN FOR CENTUR --

IF I MAY INTERRUPT, HAMILTON... I HAVE FOUND THE FACETS.

I HAVE BEEN IN CONTACT WITH THE VARIOUS HOLDERS OF THE ARTIFACTS, MUCH IN THE SAME WAY THAT I HAVE COME TO YOU. AND AS FOR THE SPINDEL, WHICH WAS LAST SEEN IN THE 12TH CENTURY IN WHAT IS NOW ISTANBUL...

... LET'S JUST SAY I'VE FOUND THAT AS WELL.

YOU...

... YOU HAVE THE SPINDEL..?

YOU'D LIKE TO SEE IT..?

GREG..?

MY GOD! IT'S... IT'S...

YES, IT IS, ISN'T IT?

FEEL FREE, HAMILTON, TO COMPARE IT WITH YOUR OWN PIECE OF THE MYSTERY... I ADMIT, I'M RATHER EAGER TO SEE THE TWO TOGETHER MYSELF!

AND SHORTLY, IN ONE OF THE BUILDING'S SUB-BASEMENTS --

HERE IT IS -- THIS FRAGMENT THAT HAS BEEN IN MY CHARGE FOR NEARLY FORTY YEARS! AS A YOUNG MAN I HAD DREAMS OF GATHERING THE FIVE TOGETHER MYSELF. BUT FOR THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE SECT...

...I STUDIED OVER THE TOMES, BOGGLED AT THE INCREDIBLE POWERS THAT WOULD BE RELEASED WITH THE COMING TOGETHER OF THE FIVE...

... THE ...

... "GIFTS" ...

...BUT I AM AN OLD MAN NOW...

... I HAVE LEARNED NOT TO WAGER WITH SUCH... RAVENOUS FORCES!

I CAN FEEL IT WITH ONLY THESE TWO PIECES...

... IT HUNGERS!

AS DO I, HAMILTON. I WANT YOU TO JOIN ME...

... I WANT TO PERFORM THE RITUAL.

WHAT?! ARE YOU... MAD?!?

HAVE YOU ANY IDEA...

... NO. I WON'T BE PARTY TO THIS, OSBORN.

YOU HAVE NO CONCEPT OF... THE RITES OF THE FIVE MUST NEVER BE INVOKED! WHAT YOU COULD UNLEASH --

SURELY, CROMWELL, THE PROMISE OF SUCH POWER...

WHAT YOU SUGGEST IS INSANITY! IT IS AN INSATIABLE SPELL -- A RITUAL BORNE OF EVIL! YOUR PROMISE OF POWER COMES WITH RISKS NO SANE MAN WOULD CONSIDER! I WARN YOU, OSBORN --

-- TURN AWAY FROM THIS!

Ah, BUT I WORRY ***NEEDLESSLY***... YOU COULDN'T PERFORM THE CEREMONY ***ANYWAY***... WITHOUT MY ***FRAGMENT***, ALL ***YOU*** HAVE ARE ...

... ***ROCKS***...

I ***ASSUME***, THEN, THAT YOU WOULDN'T CONSIDER ***SELLING***..?

NEOMANCERS! SEE Mr. ***OSBORN*** AND HIS... ASSOCIATES ***OUT!*** IMMEDIATELY! I'M AN ***OLD MAN***, OSBORN --

-- BUT I HOPE THAT IN THE TIME I HAVE LEFT I CAN ***AVOID*** HAVING TO ***TRAFFIC*** WITH THE LIKES OF ***YOU!***

THAT COULD HAVE GONE BETTER, SIR.

A MINOR ***SETBACK***, Dr. HERD --

-- WE SIMPLY SHIFT TO ***PLAN B***. REMEMBER... IT'S NOT ENTIRELY ***NECESSARY*** TO HAVE ***CROMWELL*** IN OUR CAMP. WE JUST WANTED TO KNOW ***WHERE*** THE ARTIFACT WAS ***LOCATED***.

WE'LL JUST ***WRITE*** THIS LITTLE VISIT OFF...

... AS A ***RECONNOITERING*** MISSION.

AND AT THAT MOMENT, BLOCKS AWAY --

MAN, THERE IS JUST NOTHING BETTER THAN CATCHING THE WEB-LINE EXPRESS HOME AFTER A LONG DAY OF SNAPPING PICTURES FOR THE BUGLE AS FREELANCE PHOTOGRAPHER PETER PARKER.

AND NO BETTER TIME TO BE DOING IT THAN AT SUNSET ON A BEAUTIFUL AUGUST --

AW, C'MON SPIDER-SENSE! WHADDAYA THINK, I'M LOOKING FOR TROUBLE..?

BUT, THERE IT IS --

THWIP

"-- RIGHT UNDER MY NOSE!"

Awright PAL -- NICE JOB -- YA PUSHED ALL THE RIGHT BUTTONS --

Huh? WHA --

-- NOW I'LL TAKE IT FROM HERE!

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'AT'S RIGHT, PAL -- IT'S A *GUN!*

NOW *SLIDE* THE *GREEN!*

SURE. NO PROBLEM. HERE.

THWP

EEP

YANK

OVIK

WAIT!

HOW MANY TIMES DO I GOTTA *TELL* YOU GUYS... I *DON'T* WANT YOU *PLAYING* WITH THESE IN THE *HOUSE!*

MOMMA!

NOW, FOR *YOU* --

ACTUALLY, SPIDEY -- THANKS FOR THE *HELP* --

-- BUT I THINK *I'LL* TAKE IT FROM *HERE..!*

HEY -- FINE BY *ME* -- *KNOCK YOURSELF OUT!*

... OR ... WHATEVER..!

C'N WE TAWK?

MAN! NOW THAT FELT *REALLY* GOOD../ TO *SWING* IN AND LEND A HAND TO *BALANCE* THE SCALES OF *JUSTICE!*

TO KNOW THAT I'M *APPRECIATED...* THAT MY *ADORING PUBLIC* KNOWS THAT I'M ABOUT *MORE* THAN JUST THE *PUNCHING* AND THE *HITTING...*

THWIP

THAT I'M *RESPECTED* FOR...

Ahhh, WHO'M I *KIDDING..?!*

SENSATIONAL Stan Lee presents: SPIDER-MAN

THE GATHERING OF FIVE PART ONE

ACQUISITIONS

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RS & COMICRAFT'S LIZ AGRAPHIOTIS LETTERS

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THE HOME OF PETER AND MARY JANE PARKER --

I'LL GET THE PHONE, DEAR -- YOU GO ON *STUDYING.*

DEET DEET DEET DEET DEET DEET

THANKS, AUNT ANNA.

BOY, TALK ABOUT *TEDIOUS..!*

I THOUGHT I WAS *SMART,* TAKING THE MOST *DIFFICULT* OF MY PSYCHOLOGY COURSES DURING *SUMMER SEMESTER* WHEN I WOULDN'T HAVE SO MANY *OTHER* CLASSES TO *DISTRACT ME...*

BUT THIS TERM PAPER IS SO *B-O-R-I-N-G!* ALL I WANNA DO IS CALL UP *JILL,* HEAD OUT TO THE *BEACH* AND CATCH SOME --

SORRY TO *INTERRUPT.* DEAR, BUT IT'S FOR *YOU.*

ACTUALLY, AUNT ANNA. I *WELCOME* THE INTERRUPTION...

... DID THEY SAY WHO IT *WAS..?*

PSYCHOLOGY

HE *SAID* HIS NAME WAS... RYAN *SAWYER..?*

RYAN *SAWYER?* THE *AGENT..?*

HELLO, RYAN -- HOW *ARE* YOU? GOD, IT'S BEEN *FOREVER!*

MJ! HI! LISTEN, I DON'T WANT TO KEEP YOU, I JUST WANT TO PUT A BUG IN YOUR EAR -- I WAS HAVING LUNCH WITH ALL THE "RIGHT PEOPLE" TODAY, AND YOUR NAME CAME UP...

THERE IS A REAL INTEREST IN GETTING YOU BACK IN THE MODELING BUSINESS...

...AND SOME MAJOR REPS ARE ALREADY LOOKING TO SIGN YOU! ARE YOU STILL THERE..?

WELL, I HAVEN'T HUNG UP YET...

NOW I KNOW THAT YOU GOT OUT OF THE GAME TO START A FAMILY AND --

-- BY THE WAY, HOW IS THAT BABY OF YOURS?

THE... Uh...

... SHE ...

PARENTIN

Huh? Oh, um, RYAN.. I GUESS I AM INTERESTED... LET'S TALK ABOUT IT OVER LUNCH? TOMORROW? OKAY, I'LL CALL YOU. THANKS... BYE.

MARY JANE..? MJ, ARE YOU THERE?

WELL....

... WHY NOT?

NOW IF I CAN JUST SNAG MY USUAL BUS OVER THE QUEENSBOROUGH BRIDGE, I'LL BE --

WESL SNIPE IS ADE

DON'T WALK

HEY! WHAT'S THE RACKET?!

BEEP BEEP BEEP HONK

WAITAMINUTE! THAT'S --

-- OVERRIDE!

THE GUY WITH THE CYBERNETIC SUIT THAT SUPPOSEDLY ENABLES HIM TO "OVERRIDE" ANY ELECTRICAL OR MECHANICAL DEVICE!

KRASSH

SKKREEECH

SLAMM

BAMM

AND HE'S CAUSING A HUGE ACCIDENT BY LOCKING UP ALL THOSE CARS' BRAKES -- JUST TO CROSS THE STREET?!... WE CAN'T HAVE THAT!...

THE LAST I'D HEARD, OVERRIDE HAD BECOME ONE OF NORMAN OSBORN'S LITTLE PUPPETS, HIS SUPER-POWERED ERRAND BOY...

SEE SPECTACULAR SPIDER-MAN 255 FOR THAT DEVELOPMENT -- -- Errand boy Ralf.

... AND ANYTHING THAT INVOLVES NORMAN OSBORN IS OF BIG INTEREST TO THIS LITTLE SPIDER!

WESLEY SNIPES IS BLADE

SO LET'S PUT A TAIL ON THIS GUY AND SEE WHAT OSBORN WANTS WITH --

-- THE TECHNOMANCER BUILDING?!

WHAT COULD HE -- OR OSBORN -- POSSIBLY WANT HERE..?!

THE LOONIES THAT'RE IN THERE ARE INTO ALL SORTS OF WEIRD SCIENCE AND MAGIC AND --

-- HE'S OVERRIDING THE SIDE DOOR -- HE'S IN --

TOOM

-- AND SO AM I!

I COULD TAKE HIM DOWN NOW FOR ALL THE GRIEF HE CAUSED OUTSIDE...

.. BUT I'M MUCH MORE CURIOUS TO FIND OUT WHAT OSBORN'S SENT HIM FOR!

I'LL JUST HANG BACK IN THE SHADOWS AND NAB HIM ONCE I FIND OUT WHAT HE'S AFTER..!

HALT NOW! OR WE WILL FIRE!

NOT TODAY, LOSERS!

ACCESSING THE FIRING MECHANISMS IN AUTOMATIC WEAPONS IS LIKE RIDING A BIKE TO ME! I NEVER FORGET HOW...

Huh? IT'S LOCKED UP! I'M JAMMED!

ME TOO! THE FIRING PIN IS --

THEY'LL GET THOSE FIRING PINS FREE SOON. SO, MUCH AS I DON'T WANT TO DO THIS...

...THEY'RE NOT LEAVING ME ANY CHOICE.

WHAT IS HE...?

NO!

BRAKA BRAKA BRAK

HuaaaH!

MY GOD...!

...COULDN'T'VE STOPPED HIM IN TIME... WHATEVER HE'S AFTER, HE -- OR OSBORN -- WANTS IT BAD...!

...I'D BETTER SEE IF THERE'S ANY CHANCE THOSE MEN ARE ALIVE!

FINALLY...! I'LL BE GLAD WHEN I ACTUALLY HAVE THE FRAGMENT AND CAN GET OUT OF HERE! I'M NOT CUT OUT FOR THIS KIND OF WORK...

...JUST HAVE TO OVERRIDE THE LASERS...

SHKK

SHKK

...AND IT'S MINE!

OR, HOPEFULLY, IT COULD BE MINE...IF Mr. OSBORN WILL LISTEN TO MY --

--- TAKE --

-- THAT!

I'LL --

I DON'T KNOW WHAT THIS THING IS, SNACKY --

-- BUT I'M SURE IT WASN'T WORTH KILLING THOSE TWO GUARDS OVER BACK THERE!

UNGH!

IF THE ***TECHNOMANCERS*** HAVE IT, THEN THAT'S ***BAD NEWS*** TO ***BEGIN WITH*** -- BUT IF ***OSBORN*** WANTS IT, THEN THAT'S ENOUGH TO CONVINCE ME THAT HE ***JUST SHOULDN'T HAVE IT!***

IT'S NOT ***FOR*** OSBORN, YOU JERK! IT'S FOR ***ME***...FOR MY ***WIFE***...

...YOU REMEMBER ***HER***, DON'T YOU...

THE ONE YOU ALMOST KILLED WHEN WE FOUGHT YOU WEEKS AGO?*

Huh?!

HE'S ACCESSED MY ***WEB-SHOOTERS!*** FORCED OPEN THE ***VALVES!***

I'M ***LOSING*** ALL MY ***WEB-FLUID!***

SPLURRT

SPLUUUT

* A SOMEWHAT INFLAMMATORY RE-TELLING OF AN EVENT AT THE END OF **SENSATIONAL** #25 -- – Set it straight Ralf.

...AND I'LL TAKE *THAT!*

AND JUST TO MAKE YOUR LIFE *MORE* MISERABLE --

-- LET'S JUST SEE YOU GET OUT OF *THAT!*

HE DON'T *KNOW* ME VERY WELL, *DO* HE?

HE THINKS TURNING THE *LASERS* BACK ON IS GONNA *SLOW ME DOWN...?* C'MON! I'M THE *SENSATIONAL SPIDER-MAN...!*

AGILITY --

-- IS *MY* --

-- *MIDDLE NAME!*

Oops! CAN'T GO THAT WAY!
HE'S HERE!
HALT! THAT'S A RESTRICTED AREA!
MY EXIT'S BLOCKED! HOPE I CAN FIND SOME WAY OUT OF THIS --
FREEZE! OR WE'LL SHOOT!
SORRY, BOYS --
Wha--? MY GUN --?!
THAT'LL HOLD 'EM FOR A SECOND -- BUT LET'S SEE IF THERE'S ANYTHING IN HERE I CAN USE...
Oh MY GOD! WE'RE IN THE MENAGERIE! HOLD --
-- H-HOLD YOUR FIRE!
-- WE DON'T...WANT TO SHATTER ANY OF THESE CONTAINMENT CHAMBERS! IF ANY OF THESE ABERRATIONS GET OUT --
...LIGHTS!
HOLY --
-- WHERE THE --?
-- WHAT IN GOD'S NAME IS THIS?!

GOTTA RELOAD MY *WEB-SHOOTERS* ON THE FLY --

-- AND HOPE THAT I CAN STILL *CATCH UP* WITH --

...ABERRATIONS *GET OUT...?* *THERE'S* AN IDEA...!

HE'S LET ONE OF THE *CREATURES* OUT! TAKE *POSITIONS! TAKE POSITIONS!*

AAARGH!

AHHHH!

SNAP

HELP ME! *HELP* --

QUIT YER CRYIN'! I *GOTCHA...!* YOU'RE SUCH A *BABY!*

WHOA! WHAT DID YOU BOYS BRING HOME *NOW...?* I TOLD YOU THOSE SEA-MONKEYS WOULD GROW UP TO BE *TROUBLE!*

...AND A GREAT *DIVERSION!*

OKAY -- THERE! YOU'RE FREE... NOW GO!

KRREAAAW

SWISHT

WHOA! LOW BRIDGE! GOTTA FIND SOME WAY TO --

-- THAT'LL WORK!

THAT'S IT, GORGEOUS -- COME ON!

THWIP

THWAP

WHOA! THAT WAS CLOSE! IT DIDN'T KILL IT...BUT AT LEAST IT'S NOT GOING ANYWHERE!

KABREEEEEE

I'VE DONE THIS PART ***TOO MANY*** TIMES BEFORE -- SPENT SO MUCH TIME SAVING THOSE ***TECHNOMANCER*** IDIOTS FROM THEIR OWN ***PANDORA'S BOX*** --

-- THAT OVERRIDE WAS ABLE TO ***SLIP OUT*** IN THE CONFUSION -- TAKING THAT ***ARTIFACT-THINGY*** WITH HIM!

GREAT! I'M SWINGING AROUND HERE WASTING ***WEB-FLUID*** --

-- *AND **HE'S** PROBABLY ALREADY BACK AT **OSBORN'S** PRESENTING **NORMAN** WITH THE BIG **PRIZE!***

HERE YOU ARE, Mr. OSBORN...

CALL ME ***NORMAN, GREG*** -- ***NORMAN!***

YOU DID AN ***EXCELLENT JOB*** IN RETRIEVING THIS, DOCTOR -- BY NOW YOU'RE AWARE OF HOW ***CRUCIAL*** THIS -- AS WELL AS THE ***OTHER THREE FRAGMENTS*** ARE TO MY OVERALL ***AGENDA!***

AS ALWAYS, YOU WILL BE REWARDED ***HANDSOMELY!***

ACTUALLY, I'D LIKE TO ***TALK*** TO YOU ABOUT THAT, Mr. -- Er... ***NORMAN...***

I WAS ***HOPING***... WELL, AS I ***UNDERSTAND*** IT, THIS ***RITUAL*** -- THIS ***GATHERING*** -- THAT YOU'VE BEEN SPEAKING OF, IS A GATHERING OF FIVE ***PEOPLE*** AS WELL AS THE FIVE ARTIFACTS...

... ACCORDING TO THE ***MYTHOLOGY,*** SEVERAL OF THOSE ***PARTICIPATING*** IN THIS CEREMONY POTENTIALLY STAND TO GAIN METAPHYSICAL... ***GIFTS*** ON LEVELS THAT WE CAN ONLY ***DREAM OF...***

WELL, SINCE Mr. CROMWELL WAS, SHALL WE SAY... ***UNACCOMMODATING,*** AND YOU NOW POSSESS ***TWO*** OF THE FRAGMENTS, I WAS... WONDERING IF, IN LIEU OF MY ***PAYMENT*** --

-- YOU MIGHT CONSIDER ***ME*** TO SIT IN CROMWELL'S PLACE..?

YOU, DOCTOR..? I DIDN'T THINK ***YOU*** A MAN IN QUEST OF ***POWER.***

NO, NOT FOR ***ME,*** SIR. FOR MY ***WIFE*** -- FOR ***ANNIE!***

IF ***ANYTHING,*** WITH THE POWER THAT YOU'VE ***SPOKEN OF,*** I MIGHT BE GIVEN THE ABILITY TO ***HEAL*** HER... TO ***CURE*** HER.

I ... I WOULD GIVE ***ANYTHING*** FOR THAT...

THOUGH I ***HAD*** INTENDED TO AUCTION THE SEAT OFF TO THE ***HIGHEST BIDDER...*** YOUR OWN ***NOBLE INTENTIONS...*** MOVE ME! AND OF COURSE, THERE'S ANN'S ***TRAGIC CONDITION*** TO CONSIDER...

VERY WELL, GREG. I CAN ***TRULY*** THINK OF ***NO BETTER*** CANDIDATE... COUNT YOURSELF ***IN!***

I WILL ***WARN YOU*** THAT THERE ARE SOME ***RISKS*** INVOLVED -- BUT I CAN SEE THAT YOU ARE MUCH TOO ***DETERMINED*** TO BE... ***SWAYED...***

THANK YOU, Mr. Os... NORMAN...

THANK YOU, SIR. I'LL SEE YOU ***TOMORROW.***

CERTAINLY. GOOD NIGHT, M'BOY.

WHAT *NEWS*, SCRIER?

THE *"PACKAGE"* HAS BEEN ***PROCURED***, SIR, WE HAVE JUST ***NOW*** ARRIVED -- IT IS BEING DELIVERED TO THE ***SUB-LAB*** AS WE SPEAK.

THERE WAS SOME... ***DIFFICULTIES*** WITH THE ONE CALLED ***KAINE***, BUT WE WERE ABLE TO ***PERSEVERE***.

FINALLY... AFTER ***ALL*** OF THIS...

...EVERY-THING IS COMING ***TOGETHER!***

AND THE ***MONGRAIN*** WOMAN...?

"WE HAVE REASON TO BELIEVE SHE HAS FLED TO ***PARIS...***"

Ms. ***MONGRAIN...?*** DON'T BE ***ALARMED***, I'M HERE TO ***HELP YOU...***

MY NAME IS ***JOE ROBERTSON...***

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